

## MEPs call for EU democracy, rule of law and fundamental rights watchdog

**To end the current “crisis-driven” approach to perceived breaches of democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights in EU member states, the EU Commission should set up a binding EU mechanism to monitor and report annually on their records in these fields, say MEPs in a resolution passed on Tuesday. This mechanism should include objective benchmarks and lay down a gradual approach to remedying breaches, they add.**

“We have provided the European Union with the instruments to enforce all the other policy areas - competition policies, police and justice cooperation, foreign policies (...), but our core values are not protected by instruments that are sufficiently strong to make sure that the values are upheld throughout the European Union”, said lead MEP Sophie in’t Veld (ALDE, NL), in the debate ahead of the vote. Her legislative initiative was passed by 405 votes to 171, with 39 abstentions.

The new EU mechanism should ensure that all EU member states respect the values enshrined in the EU treaties and set clear, evidence-based and non-political criteria for assessing their records on democracy, rule of law and fundamental rights (DRF) in a systematic way and on an equal footing, says the resolution text.

Parliament’s proposal for an EU mechanism on DRF aims to incorporate existing DRF tools in a single instrument and ensure that they are used to the full. It also aims to bridge the apparent gap between DRF monitoring in EU candidate countries and the lack of effective tools vis-à-vis those that are already EU member states. Finally, it provides for regular DRF debates in the EU institutions and national parliaments.

### Next steps

Parliament asks the Commission to present a proposal by September 2017 for a Union Pact for Democracy, the Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights in the form of an inter-institutional agreement aligning and complementing existing mechanisms. The Commission will have to give a reasoned reply to Parliament’s request.

## **Note to editors - How it would work**

*Every year, the EU Commission, in consultation with an independent panel of experts, would draw up a “European DRF Report” on the state of DRF in member states, including country-specific recommendations, based on indicators such as the separation of powers, freedom and pluralism of the media and access to justice.*

*The report would form the basis for any further action by the Commission and set a clear, progressive approach, ranging from opening a dialogue with the member state, through invoking EU Treaty Article 7(1) to provide an early warning before a serious breach has materialised, to the final step of activating EU Treaty Article 7, under which a member state’s voting right in Council can be suspended.*

**Procedure:** *INL, legislative initiative resolution*

[2015/2254\(INL\)](#)

## **Further information**

[Adopted text \(2015/2254\(INL\)\) will soon be available here \(25.10.2016\)](#)

[Video recording of debate \(click on 25.10.2016\)](#)

[Video of the press conference \(25.10.2016\)](#)

[EbS+ \(25.10.2016\)](#)

[Audiovisual material for media](#)

[EP Rules of Procedure: Rule 46: Initiative pursuant to Article 225 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#)

## **Political groups**

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